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UNCLAS HARARE 000965

SIPDIS

AF/PD FOR COX AND ROBERTSON, AF/S FOR KRAFT AND  
SCHALACHTER. AF/RA FOR SWANN, INR/R/MR, NSC FOR JENDAYI  
FRAZER

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REPORT -- U.S. ACCUSED OF COORDINATING  
TERROR CAMPAIGN IN ZIMBABWE

1. The lead story in the April 22 edition of the government-controlled "Chronicle" accuses the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) of "planning a massive terrorist attack" in Harare and Bulawayo in a move "to invoke civil unrest and pave way for military intervention by Britain and the United States." The "exclusive" article, based on information from nameless sources and authored by an anonymous "Chronicle Reporter," alleges that the planned "terrorist attack" is being "co-ordinated by a 'political affairs' officer at the U.S. Embassy." Under headline "Extreme terror!: Buildings to be bombed; March to State House on cards," the paper reports:
2. "The opposition MDC, is planning a massive terrorist attack that will bring down some tall buildings in Harare and Bulawayo in a series of bombings, as the increasingly desperate opposition party steps up its campaign to fast-track Mr. Morgan Tsvangirai into power by creating a 'crisis,' Chronicle has learnt. Sources within MDC's national executive said plans are at an advanced stage to start bombing strategic buildings in the major cities to invoke civil unrest and pave way for military intervention by Britain and the U.S. Targeted are five buildings in Harare and three in Bulawayo and MDC teams were putting 'final touches' to the terrorist attack being co-ordinated by a 'political affairs' officer at the U. S. Embassy. Sources privy to the details of the plan dubbed 'massive economic sabotage' said the scheme had been unanimously voted for by MDC's national executive at their meeting last week."
3. Comment: The Bulawayo-based, government-owned "Chronicle" frequently publishes outlandish "news" stories that have no basis in fact. The paper specializes in bizarre unsigned articles that rely exclusively on anonymous sources. Current editor Stephen Ndlovu is the third person to hold that position in the last year, and is a protg of Information Minister Jonathan Moyo. The "Chronicle's" circulation has dropped by nearly 50 percent in the 18 months, with current circulation at about 25,000 copies per day. End comment.

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